

Notes

Distribution, habitat and conservation status of *Peperomia bellendenkerensis* (Piperaceae), a rare endemic from the 'Wet Tropics' of north-eastern Queensland

In the recent account of *Peperomia* in Australia (Forster 1993), *P. bellendenkerensis* Domin was known only from the two original collections made by Karel Domin on Bellenden Ker, north-eastern Queensland in 1909. No information was available on the habitat of the species and a conservation coding of 1K (sensu Briggs & Leigh 1988) was suggested.

During investigation (by PDB) of the fern flora of the Russell River valley in September 1993, plants of *Peperomia bellendenkerensis* were rediscovered. Based on the population size, the land-use at the site [Bellenden Ker Resources Reserve] and the close proximity of cleared farm-land, the conservation coding of this species was changed to E (Henderson 1994). Subsequent collections have now revealed at least six discrete populations of *P. bellendenkerensis*. A reliable but unconfirmed report has also been received from R.L. Jago (pers. comm.) that the species occurs also at the head of the East Mulgrave River, NW of Babinda (within Wooroonooran National Park).

***Peperomia bellendenkerensis* Domin,**
Biblioth. Bot. 89(4): 559 (1928); P.I.
Forster, Austrobaileya 4: 95 (1993).

Additional specimens examined: Queensland. COOK DISTRICT: Wooroonooran N.P. (formerly N.P. 226), unnamed tributary of Westgid Creek 1.5 km NW of Cable Car Base Station, Apr 1994, *Chinnock* 8741 & *Bostock* (AD, BRI); Wooroonooran N.P., Frenchmans Creek, south branch, Apr 1994, *Bostock* 1549 & *Chinnock* (BRI); Wooroonooran N.P., Frenchmans Creek, west branch, Apr 1994, *Bostock* 1560 & *Chinnock* (BRI); Weinerts Creek, 1 km NW of Babinda, Dec 1993, *Jago* 3055 (BRI); Wooroonooran N.P., Josephine Falls, May 1994, *Bostock* 1611 & *Chinnock* (BRI); Bellenden Ker Resources Reserve (formerly Departmental & Official Purposes Reserve [Dept of Minerals and Energy/Dept of Environment and Heritage] 1692), Majuba Creek, Sep 1993, *Bostock* 1459 & *Turpin* (BRI).

Distribution and habitat: *P. bellendenkerensis* is known to occur over 11 minutes of latitude from Westgid Creek in the north to Majuba Creek in the south (Fig. 1), with all of the recorded localities in the eastern foothills of the Bellenden Ker/Bartle Frere mountain massif.

Plants of *P. bellendenkerensis* are usually lithophytic on the northern to north-western faces of granite boulders in lowland complex mesophyll vineforest where they grow in loose humus in deep shade, sometimes associated with *P. enervis* C.DC. & F.Muell. and with the ferns *Antrophyum callifolium* Blume, *A. plantagineum* (Cav.) Kaulf. and *Microsorium membranifolium* (R.Br.) Ching. At the west branch of Frenchmans Ck, plants were also observed to be epiphytic in the upper parts of the canopy.

Conservation status: *Peperomia bellendenkerensis* is infrequent at the known localities. However, it is likely that such a small and easily overlooked plant occurs quite widely in the area where it has been located to date. All of the known localities are either within Wooroonooran N.P. or are in land parcels immediately adjacent to this park and, with the possible exception of the Weinerts Creek site, can be considered as being relatively secure with no obvious threats from human activities. It is suggested that an appropriate conservation status is therefore 2RC (Briggs & Leigh 1988).

Acknowledgements

Thanks to R.J. Chinnock (AD), R.L. Jago and G. Turpin (BRI) for assistance with the collection of material. Fieldwork by PDB was wholly supported by a grant from the 'Wet Tropics Management Authority' to survey the fern flora of the Russell River valley.

References

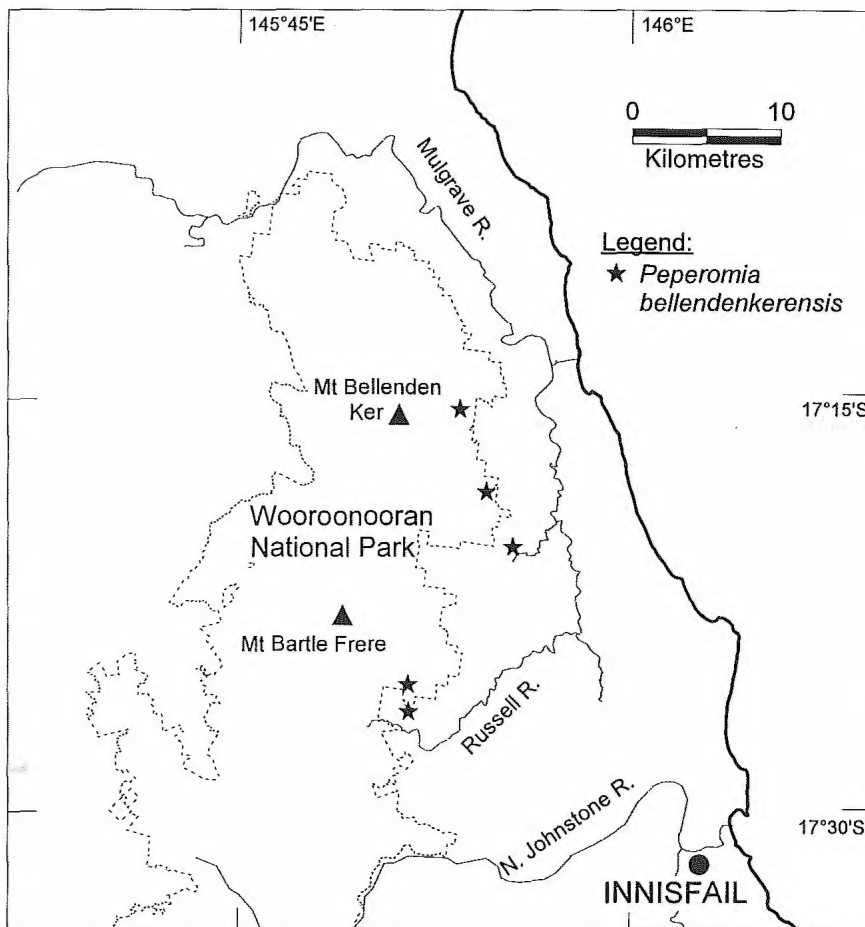
BRIGGS, J.D. & LEIGH, J.H. (1988). *Rare or Threatened Australian Plants*. 1988 Revised Edition. Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service Special Publication No. 14. Canberra: Australian National Parks & Wildlife Service.

HENDERSON, R.J.F. (ed.) (1994). *Queensland Vascular Plants: Names and Distribution*. Brisbane: Queensland Department of Environment & Heritage.

FORSTER, P.I. (1993). A taxonomic revision of the genus *Peperomia* Ruiz & Pav. (Piperaceae) in mainland Australia. *Austrobaileya* 4: 93-104.

Peter D. Bostock & Paul I. Forster

Queensland Herbarium, Meiers Road, Indooroopilly, Qld 4068, Australia



Map 1. Distribution of *Peperomia bellendenkerensis* in north-eastern Queensland.